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**TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
MARCH 12, 2008**

I appreciate the opportunity to support Senate Bill 579, An Act Concerning Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus with a critical amendment to screen at risk patients for MRSA upon entry to the hospital.

This proposal requires hospitals to develop a plan to reduce the incidence of MRSA infections in their facilities.

There are an estimated 100,000 deaths each year from MRSA infections in our nation's hospitals. The full extent of the problem in Connecticut hospitals is virtually unknown, but about 85% of all MRSA infections are hospital-based. Hospitals such as the Veterans' Hospital in Pittsburgh have dramatically reduced the incidence of MRSA infections in their hospital through proper patient screening and aggressive action against practices that encourage the spread of the bacteria.

Although SB 579 is a good start, I strongly urge the committee to amend the proposal to require that hospitals screen at risk patients, including every person admitted to the hospital or transferred to the intensive care unit. Also, screening should be done on anyone admitted to the hospital from a nursing home or admitted to such hospital at least five times in the five years preceding the admission or for any surgical procedure. Also anyone currently undergoing chemotherapy or receiving dialysis treatment or who meets such other conditions for a person at risk for the infection as established by DPH. Screening is already required by law in Illinois, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. I have attached a proposed amendment for the committee's consideration.

Appropriate testing and screening seems eminently sensible, indeed plain common sense. Sharply reducing MRSA infections, including an estimated 100,000 MRSA hospital deaths each year, requires clear steps to understand the source and scope of the MRSA problem. Hospitals have a moral obligation to screen and report MRSA infections, but we must make it a binding legal duty.

I urge the committee's favorable consideration of Senate Bill 579 with the attached amendment.

**PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO SENATE BILL 579, AN ACT CONCERNING
METHICILLIN-RESISTANT STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS**

On line 1, after the effective date, insert "(a)"

After line 13, insert the following

(b) On or after January 1, 2009, each hospital shall test for the presence of methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus: (1) each person admitted to the hospital who is admitted or transferred to the intensive care unit; (2) each person admitted to the hospital from a nursing home; (3) each person admitted to the hospital who had been admitted to such hospital at least five times in the five years preceding the admission; (4) each person admitted to the hospital for any surgical procedure; (5) each person admitted to the hospital who is currently undergoing chemotherapy or receiving dialysis treatment; and (6) each person admitted to the hospital who meets such other conditions for a person at risk for the infection as established by the Department of Public Health.

(c) On or before March 1, 2010 and annually thereafter, each hospital shall report to the Department of Public Health the number of persons admitted to the hospital that were tested for methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus pursuant to a test administered in accordance with subsection (b), the number of such persons who tested positive for such infection and the number of laboratory tests involving persons admitted to the hospital that resulted in a positive finding for methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus other than tests administered in accordance with subsection (b). The Department of Public Health shall publicize such information on the department website.